

*The Times of men are in the hand
of God.*

OR
A SERMON

Occasioned by that awfull Providence which hapned in
BOSTON in **NEW ENGLAND**, the 4th day of the 3^d
Moneth 1675. (when part of a Vessel was blown up in
the Harbour, and nine men hurt, and three mortally
wounded) wherein is shewed how we should
sanctifie the dreadfull Name of God
under such awfull
Dispensations.

By **INCREASE MATHER**,
Teacher of a Church of Christ.

*Job. 23. 14. He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and may such things
are with him.*

*Mat. 13. 35. 6. 37. Watch ye therefore, (for ye know not when the master of the House
cometh; at evening, or at midnigh, or at Cock crying, or in the morning), lest
coming suddenly he find you sleeping, and in that I say, unto you, I say, unto all,
watch*

*Luke. 13. 4. 5. Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and slew them,
think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem, I
tell you nay, but except you Repent, you shall all likewise perish.*

B O S T O N,
Printed by *John Foster* 1675.



To the READER.

HOW unsearchable are the Judgments of God? how are his ways past finding out? Sometimes his awfull hand falleth only upon the Righteous as to Temporal Judgments. Sometimes only upon the wicked. sometimes he doth cut off both together. And this to the end that man should find nothing after him, whom wee cannot trace. his Judgments are a great deep. His way is in the Sea, his path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. Nevertheless there is a day coming (and the Lord hasten that day) which is a day of Revelation, when the mystery of providence shall be opened in the sight and hearing of all the earth. In the meantime it becometh us, not to censure those that are made Examples of divine Severity: and yet with Humility and an Holy Fear to take notice of the solemn works of God, considering that it is said, they who regard not the works of the Lord nor the operation of his hand shall be destroyed. The Lord expects that we should not suffer such tremendous Dispensations, as that which occasioned the Preaching of this Sermon, pass without deep and sorrowfull observation. Even the men of Bethshemesh, when the Lord had smitten so many among them with a great slaughter Lamented and said who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? shall we be more stupid and senseless than they? when Uzza (though a good man) dyed by a sudden stroke of God upon him, David called the place Perez-uzzah and he was afraid of God that day. How many perez-uzzas may we speak of? Look in this Town, and in that Town, and in the other Town, and we may see
Places

To the Reader

Places that may bear the name of Perizzia. It will be good for us to keep alive in our Hearts, a reverentiall and filial fear of the infinite Majesty, who hath an absolute dominion over us and ours, and may doe to us and with us, what he will and cannot doe us wrong. And it will be good for us when our souls have in remembrance the wormwood and the gall, to be humbled for those sins which have provoked the Lord, to inflict such bitter strokes. Doubtless that sin of disregard to the word of God, is that which especially hath provoked the eyes of his glory. How many are there that give way to their own sloth, and let themselves to sleep at Sermons, albeit that is a sin which God sometime hath punished with sudden death, witness the awfull example of Eutichus Acts. 20. 9. How many that turn their backs upon the blessing of God when pronounced by those whom God hath chosen to minister, and to bless in his Name, though often solemnly reprov'd for it in the Name of the Lord, who hath said, that he that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall be destroyed suddenly? How many that make little or no Conscience to meditate on, or to practice the things which they have heard? Is it not a Providence to be observed, that those dreadfull thundrings and lightnings which have been amongst us from year to year, whereby not a few have been slain, have for the most part hapned upon, or near unto that day when the silver trumpet of the gospel is went to sound, as if God should say from Heaven, if you will not hear my word speaking unto you, the voice of the Lord shall shake the wilderness, that shall come which shall make you hear. And it will be good for us to prepare for the worst
of

of Times or things that may befall us in this world; Considering that sudden changes upon particular Persons are warnings to the whole. Yea and to pray that that which these things seem to Portend may be diverted: yea to pray, that our sun may not goe down over us at noon, and that the Lord would not darken the earth in the cleer day.

If the Publication of this Sermon (such as it is) may tend to awaken any to consider the things of their Peace, in this their day, (although the Importunity of others greatly concerned in the late awfull dispensation, hath constrained thereunto against my thoughts and inclinations) I shall have cause to rejoyce thereat. I dare not, but from time to time, (after my poor manner) take notice of the solemn Providences of God, that so I may endeavour that myself and others may make that Improvement of them, which the glorious and blessed God looketh for; For indeed my soul dreads to be found amongst the number of sleeping Watchmen.

Possibly some may wonder, that I should so frequently appear in this way, who am the least amongst my Brethren, and also one that hath his Head and Hands and Heart, otherwise full of thoughts and Labours. The Truth is (although I should not be weary in well doing, yet such is mine infirmity as that) I am weary. And if the Lord give me to finish two small Treatises, which I have upon the Anvill, (and which I doe confess my Heart is much upon) the one concerning Christ and Heaven, the other respecting, The Rising Generation in New-England, I doe not Purpose (although I should live much longer then I think I shall) to be any more troublesome in this way.

I have

To the Reader.

I have long expected that Christ would come and call for me; but I know that untill my work be done, I am immortall. And I trust that the Lord in whose hand my Times are, will enable to finish the work, which he hath given me to doe in the world.

Let the godly Reader help me by his Prayers, who need them, And who am

Boston 9th:
of 4th Moneth
1675.

*An unworthy servant of
Jesus Christ*

Increase Mather.

Psal.

Psal. 31. 15.

My Times are in thy Hand.

THe Pen-man of this Psalme was *David* as we may see by the Title of it, where it is said to be a *Psalm of David*. Concerning the time and occasion of the penning of it, there are various Conjectures. Some think that it was occasioned by Sauls Persecution. Others conceive that David wrote this Psalm in the time when he was persecuted by Absalom. And this latter seems to be the more probable Conjecture. For there are divers passages therein, which suit with the state and condition that David was in when pursued by Absalom, *e. g.* Those expressions in the 9th and in the latter part of the 10th verses, *Mine eye is weary* Mo'llerus
med with grief, my life is spent with grief, and my years with Musculus &
Sighing. Those expressions seem to intimate, that David was at this time come to the close of his dayes, and that he was in extremity of grief and sorrow. Now the greatest sorrows that ever came upon David, were those that hapned to him in the dayes of Absalom; then also was he neer unto his end. Again, in the latter part of the 10th verse he saith *My Strength falleth because of mine iniquity*, when as the afflictions which came upon him under Saul, were not because of any special iniquity which he had been guilty of, but for tryal, and that so he might thereby be fitted to doe greater Service for God in his Generation, but the afflictions which came upon him in Absoloms dayes, were the fruit of his sin and back-sliding from God. Likewise that passage in the 21 verse where he saith *the Lord hath shewed me his marvelous kindnesse as in a strong City*, was literally fulfilled in Absoloms time: for then David was at *Atabaniaim*, and much kindnesse was shewed unto him therein. However certain it is that David was at this time in great distresse and,

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therefore

therefore his scope in this Psalm is to pray for deliverance out of trouble. There are in this *Content* divers arguments to strengthen his faith in prayer, in that he had put his trust in God verse 14. *I trusted in thee O Lord.* That is a great argument to be used in prayer, a man would be loth to fail another that confideth in him, much less will the Holy blessed God disappoint those that doe indeed put their trust in him. 2. From the consideration of that Covenant Interest which he had in God, *ibid. Thou art my God.* That is a mighty argument. He that can say unto God thou art mine, thou hast in the Covenant engaged thy self to me, as my God, may expect Salvation from him. 3. He doth strengthen his faith from the consideration of the Providence of God, so in the words of the Text.

Wee shall not detain you with any opening of the words; besides what may be spoken to under the *Doctrine* from them, which is.

Doctr. *That the Times of men are in the hand of God.*

Now for the clearing of this Doctrine four things may be attended. 1. To shew what is here meant by the hand of God. 2. What times of men are in the Lords hand. 3. How it doth appear that the times of men are in Gods hand. 4. The Reasons of this Doctrine.

Quest. 1. What is here meant by the hand of God?

Ans. 1. There is the hand of Divine power. Strength is manifested by the hand: we say of a strong man that he is a man of his hands, so the Lords strength and power it is denoted by his hand. It is said concerning Elijah that *the hand of the Lord was upon him and he ran before Ahab* 1. Kings. 18. 4. that is the power of God was upon him, enabling of him so to run. And Ezekiel saith *the hand of the Lord was upon me* Chap. 37. 1. that is a mighty power of Prophecy. Thus Psal. 74. 11. *Why withdrawest thou thy hand pluck it out of thy bosom,* that is to say exert and put forth thy almighty power. Isai. 59. 1. *The Lords hand is not shortened that it cannot save.* God hath as much power as ever he had, he is as able to save his people now as ever he was, therefore is it said that his hand is not shortned. Wherefore when it is said that the times of men are in the hand of God, The meaning is that he hath power to dispose of their times, men

men have not power to dispose of their own times, nor have others that power but the Lord alone.

2. There is the hand of divine Providence, Job. 2. 10. *Shall wee receive good at the hand of God and shall wee not receive evill.* The Providence of God doth dispence afflictions as well as mercyes to his people, therefore are they said to receive evill as well as good at the hand of God. So Chap. 19. 21. *Have pity upon me O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me,* that is to say, the Providence of God is gone forth againſt me. 1. Pet. 5. 6. *Humble your selves under the mighty hand of God,* i. e. under the afflicting dispensations of his divine Providence, & Solomon saith that the righteous & the wise and their works are in the hand of God Eccle. 9. 1.

Because both the Persons and the works of the best and most prudent men are guided by a divine Providence. When God hath bestowed gifts and graces upon any man, qualifying him for Service, he doth by a secret providence order what work he shall doe, wherefore the divine Providence is intended by that *Hand*, which the text speaketh of. David doth here encourage himself from the Consideration of the All-disposing Providence of God. Wee come to a second enquiry viz. *what is meant by the Times of men which are said to be in the hand of God?*

Ans. 1. *The beginning of a mans time is in the Lords hand.* He ordereth when every man shall come into the world. Hence it is said that there is a time to be born Eccle. 3. 2. that is to say, God hath set and determined the time wherein every man shall be born. It was said with respect unto Isaac Gen. 21. 2. *Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a Son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.* The Lord had set the time when Isaac should come into the world, the same is true with reference unto all men that ever were or shall be brought forth into the world. Hence some are born in one age and some in another. Some before the Law, others under the Law, and others in the dayes of the Gospel, since Christ the Son of God hath come into the world. He in whose hand are the times of men doth order in what time and under what dispensation each man shall live.

2. *The end of a mans time is in the Lords hand.* The time when he shall goe out of the world, as well as the time of his coming into it, the day of death as well as the day of his birth.

the Times of men are in the hand of God.

Hence Solomon saith *there is a time to dye* Eccl. 3. 2. The day of a mans death is emphatically called *his time* Eccle. 9. 12. *Man knoweth not his time*, that is to say he knoweth not the time when he shall dy and goe out of this world, and this time is in the Lords hand, and therce is said to be appointed Hebr. 9. 27. *Is appointed unto all men once to dye.* There is indeed a *statute Law* determining that every Sinner shall dye, Gen. 2. 17. and in that respect death is appointed; but besides that it is appointed in the eternall Decree of God. Not onely the thing, but the time and all the Circumstances attending the death of any man, were appointed by the Lord. Hence it was said, *The time drew nigh that Israel must dye.* Gen. 47. 29. Gods time was come and therefore Jacob now must dye,

3. *The duration of a mans time is in Gods hand.* Not onely when he shall come into the world, but how long he shall continue in it, whether he shall be long lived or short lived. First when a man cometh into the world, no one can tell whether he shall dye in Childhood, or in Youth, or in his middle age, or in his old age, but God in whose hand is *his Time* knoweth how it shall be, wherefore Job saith, *I will wait all the dayes of my [appointed time] till my change come* Chap 14. v. 14. And in the fifth verse of that Chapter he saith of every man that *his dayes are determined, the number of his moneths are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* Not onely the number of the years, but the moneths nay the dayes that every man shall live are determined by God, and beyond that time he shall not live one day. This then is Davids meaning when he saith *my times are in thy hand*, Thou canst make me live as long as thou wilt, notwithstanding my enemyes seek for my life.

4. *Those Changes of time that a people or person may in this world pass under are ordered by the hand of God.* Hence the Psalmist doth not onely say *my Time* in the singular Number, but *my Times* in the plurall Number. i. e. both prosperous and aduerse Seasons. There are vicissitudes of times, we read *of the times that went over David, and over Israel, and over the Kingdomes of the Countreyes* 1 Chron. 29. 30. one while it was a time of peace and prosperity, another while it was a time of great distraction and misery; thus did *times pass over them.* As in publick Concerns; *Times may change, it is in the Lords hand*

tempora significant per
metonymiam
adjuncti conditionis
varietatem, quia tempora
habet
cum.
tempus

to change them when and as he pleaseth Dan. 2.21. *He changeth the times, he removeth kings and setteth up kings.* So as to particular persons, times may change with them, he that is now in prosperity, may on a suddain be cast into great misery. Psal. 39.6,7. *I said in my prosperity I shall never be moved, thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.* How so? Absoloms Rebellion brought a suddain change upon David. *Prosperous seasons* are in the Lords hand, This is intended by the Psalmist, Thou Lord (saith he) canst make my dayes to be as prosperous as thou wilt. And *adverse seasons* these are called *Times* Psal. 10.1. Why hidest thou thy self in times of trouble? And these are all ordered by the hand of the most high,

5, *The time of Deliverance out of trouble is in Gods hand.* Thus the Chaldee Paraphrast understands these words, *my times are in thy hand viz,* the time of my Redemption, but though the words muſt not be ſo confined, yet that is implied in them. God hath determined the time when, as well as the meanes whereby, he will ſave his people out of trouble Psal. 102. 13. *The time to ſave Zion, yea the ſet time is come.* Deliverance out of trouble will not ariſe untill the Lords time be come. David hoped for Deliverance in the dayes of Saul even till his eyes failed with looking for Salvation, but it came not as ſoon as he looked for it, becauſe the Lords time was not yet. Great have been the expectations of theſe dayes that Rome ſhould fall, and that the Churches ſinall Deliverance from the Perſecution of *Anti-Chriſt* ſhould be accompliſhed at ſuch a time and at ſuch a time. Many have been looking for light, but behold darkneſs. Is it becauſe the thing is uncertain? No, but the reaſon of theſe diſappointments is, in that men have been expecting theſe things before the Lords time be fulfilled, Deliverance then will not come before the ſet time, nor ſtay one day longer than that time. Hence is that observable place of Scripture Exo. 12.41. *And it came to paſſe at the end of four hundred and thirty years even the ſelf ſame day it came to paſſe, that all the Hoſts of the Lord went out of Egypt.* God had promiſed Abraham that it ſhould be ſo four hundred and thirty years before, and we ſee that he kept his word even to a day. And it is ſaid concerning Joſeph Psal. 105. 18, 19. *whoſe feet they hurt with fetters, he was laid in iron, untill the time that his word came, that is, was fulfilled: for*

Answereth in
Locum.

THE HANDS OF MEN ARE IN THE HANDS OF GOD.

coming in the Scripture often noteth fulfilling. God had long before shewed Joseph in a dream, that he should be advanced highly, and when the time for accomplishing that word was fulfilled, Joseph was made to forget all his troubles.

6. *The time for Repentance is in the hand of God.* Hence not onely Repentance it self, but the time for it is said to be his Gift, as I have lately and largely endeavoured to shew you in my course on the second Chapter of the Revelation you have heard how the Lord there spake unto Jezebel *I gave her space to repent.* Every mans day of grace (that hath such a day) is in Gods hand. Hence it is that some have a far longer day of grace continued to them then others have, some their day of grace is at an end whilst in youth, others their day continueth untill their middle age, some to old age, Is this from themselves? No, but from the Lord. You have often heard that life time in this world is a time for Repentance, while a sinner is alive, it is possible that if he seek the Lord he may find him. He may possibly obtain the pardon of his sins, and the salvation of his soul, by Faith in Jesus Christ, but when once his Soul is out of his body, when once he is dead (dying in his sins) it is impossible, God that cannot lye having declared that it shall then never be. Now the lives of men are in the hands of God, therefore Daniel said unto that king, Chap. 5. v. 23. *the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy wayes hast thou not glorified.* The time of prosperity is a day of grace, when a man doth enjoy Health, Ease, Strength &c. it is the fittest Season in the world to repent, and make his peace with God in. Now this time you heard but now is in the Lords hand. While the blessed Spirit of God continueth striving with the Soul, thats a day of grace indeed. When you are convinced, awakened, affected in any measure by the word or works of God, then is an happy time to repent in. Now that Season is surely in the Lords hand, for who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor? wherefore the Apostle saith Phil. 2. 13, 14. *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to doe of his own good pleasure.* As if it were said, Tremble to miss Gods Season, you know not how soon God may cease working in your hearts by his Spirit. The time of the Lords working upon the hearts of men, is as he shall please

pleafe. Thus have wee seen what times are in the Lords hand.

The next thing is to enquire, *How it doth appear that the times of men are in Gods hand*

For Answer wee shall only mention two things as *Demonstrations* of this truth.

First it is evident in that *God hath decreed and determined what ever cometh to pass in the world.* The Lords will, his eternall purpose and decree is sometimes expressed by his *Hand* Acts. 4.28. *for to doe whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.* For as men doe work and accomplish their designs by their hands, so doth the Lord accomplish all his works by the power of of his own will Ephe. 1. 11. *He worketh all things after the Counsel of his own will.* The will of God is a working will, therefore it is set forth by that of his hand. Two things are certain, first that *whatever God doth will (that is decree) shall surely come to pass* Job. 42.2. *No thought can be withholden from thee.* If God have a thought in his heart to doe this or that, none can hinder him from performing the thoughts and intents of his heart, He is of one mind and who can turn him? Isai. 14.27. *For the Lord of Hosts hath purposed and who shall disanul it? and his hand is stretched out and who shall turn it back?* Hence the will of God is said to be *Irresistible* Rom. 9.19. *who hath resisted his will?* No one can hinder him from having his holy will in whatever he hath a mind to accomplish. Again, it is as true that *what doth come to pass was first determined by the Lord.* Therefore James when he was speaking in the Synod at Jerusalem had this saying, *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world* Acts. 15.18. If God doth fore-know whatever things shall come to pass, he must needs will them or will them, but they do not come to pass against the Lords will, or whether he will or no. Certainly it is in his hand to prevent any thing that cometh to pass in the world. There is no prosperous or comfortable event at any time hapneth, but it was before appointed by the Lord; nor is there any evill hapneth but according to the determination of the only wise God. The most dismall Providence when once it is accomplished, wee may know that this was decreed before the world began, yea from Eternity. When Jesus Christ the

Son of God was hanged and Crucified, that was the strangest and moit dismal providence that ever was since the world began, yet this was decreed from eternitie Acts. 2. 23. *Him being delivered by the determinate Counsell and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have Crucified and Slain.* And particularly there is an holy and eternal Decree respecting the times of men Job. 7. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth?* Acts. 17. 26. *God hath determined the times before appointed.*

2. Another demonstration of the truth before is this, *There is a Providence in every thing that cometh to pass.* God doth execute his decree by his works of Creation and Providence. Gods Providence is that whereby he doth dispose of (not only some things but) all things as shall be for his own glory. Those things which as to men are moit fortuitous accidentall and casual, in respect of God are purposely and providentially ordered; for example, *Casual Homicide*, when a man kills another accidentally against his will, the holy blessed God ordered that matter on purpose, upon holy grounds and for holy ends. See a clear Scripture for this Exod. 21. 12. *He that smiteth a man so that he dye shall surely be put to death. But if a man lye not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then will I appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.* So that if a man happen to kill another against his will, God delivers the man that is slain into the hands of him that smote him, which evidently sheweth that there is a providence of God in all such *Casualties*. So in *Lottery* as to men the thing is doubtfull and fortuitous, which way the Lot shall fall, but God hath beforehand contrived, and will by an effectuall Providence order accordingly how the thing shall be Prov. 16. 33. *The Lot is cast into the lap (so was the Custom in Solomons dayes) but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* There is not the least matter cometh to pass in the world without the Providence of God Mat. 10. 29 *Are not two Sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* The meaning is, that there is an hand of Providence in all events, yea in the smallest matters that happen in the world. Sure then there is not any great and solemn and awfull event hapning at any time in any place but the hand of
Divine

Divine Providence is therein, and that not only as to the thing, but as to the time and manner and all circumstances whatsoever that may occur: if a Sparrow doth not fall to the ground without God, much less doth a man fall into the grave (especially if the fall be sudden and awfull) but there is a special Providence therein.

But the truth of this Doctrine will appear further by speaking to the grounds and Reasons of it, wee shall briefly mention two.

Reas. 1. *Because men are the Lords Creatures* therefore it is but reason that their Times should be in his hand. He is our Maker Psal. 95. 6. *Come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before God our maker.* So in Psal. 100. 3. *Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that made us and not wee our selves.* Yea and God hath made us for himself, for his own use and service Rev. 4. 11. *Thou hast created all things, for thy pleasure they are and were Created.* If a man make a thing for another and not for himself, he hath not such power to dispose of it, but if he make it for himself he may dispose of it thus or so, as shall seem good unto him: now God hath made us for himself and not for another, therefore he may well dispose of us, and of our times as shall seem good unto him.

Reas. 2. *From the absolute Dominion which the Lord hath over us.* Wee may reason from the Soveraignty of the most high. And this followeth from the former: Inasmuch as God hath made us, therefore he hath an absolute dominion over us Rom. 9. 22. *Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour and another to dishonour.* The Potter hath a kind of absolute power over the Clay, for he may dispose of it thus or so, as shall seem good unto him. Wee are before God as the Clay is before the Potter, wherefore the Scripture speaketh much concerning that absolute Dominion which the Lord hath over his Creatures, Deut. 32. 39. *See now that I even I am he and there is no God with mee, I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.* At the same time some are wounded and not others, some are killed by the same blow and others are kept alive, amongst wounded ones some are healed and others shall not recover, why? It is the Lord that doth these things and hath power so to doe. Wherefore Elihu said to Job, Chap. 33. 12.

I will answer thee that God is greater than man, why dost thou strive against him for he giveth no account of any of his matters, that is to say he is not bound to give any account of any of his matters, though sometimes he condescends unto it, yet that is more then he is obliged unto, saith *Elihu*. God may take from thee thy estate, and thy Relations, all by one sudden awful blow of his hand, and yet never tell thee why he doth so. Such is the absolute Sovereignty and high Supremacy which the glorious and eternall God hath over his Creatures. So that well did Nebuchadnezzar make confession saying, *all the Inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing and he doth according to his will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and there is none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou*, Dan. 4.35. No man hath an absolute Dominion over others so as that his Will shall be his Rule, but God most high hath such a Dominion, so as that it is impossible that he should doe any wrong unto his Creatures, however he dispose of them or of their Times.

Wee come now to *Infer* some Uses from this Doctrine.

This Truth may be applyed, 1. By way of Instruction.

2. By way of Consolation. 3. Of Reprehension. 4. By way of Exhortation and Direction.

Use. 1. Of Instruction in two Particulars.

1. In case wee enjoy good times, if wee see good dayes this sheweth us unto whom wee ought to be thankfull, even unto that God in whose hand our Times are. If wee have our lives when others are snatched away by Death, if wee have health when others are in sickness, if wee have ease when others have broken bones and are in extremity of anguish, let us be for ever thankfull unto God. If wee have plenty when others are in wants, as at this day our Neighbours are afflicted with great Scarcity as to Provision, but we have Plenty; let not the Lord have cause to complain against us, as sometimes against the Church of Israel, Hos. 2.8. *Shee did not know that I gave her Corn*. Wee also enjoy the liberties of the Gospel, and in that respect see good dayes. As when those Liberties are taken away, the dayes are evill Eph. 5. 16. *Redeem the Time, for the dayes are evill*. Why were they evill? namely in respect of sore Persecutions raised against the Church of God, therefore when there is no Persecution (as through

through Grace with us) there is not, those are good dayes; and wee ought then to be thankfull to God on the account thereof. And inasmuch as that God, in whose hand is our Time hath so ordered as that wee are brought into the world in these Gospel dayes, wee owe him Everlasting praises on that account. Wee might have been born in those times of Ignorance, when God suffered all nations to walk in their own wayes, even in those dark ages of the world, which were before the Sun of righteousness did arise upon the earth, and so have perished for lack of knowledge: but God hath given us to live all our dayes under the light of the Gospel. And have not many of you had a long day of Grace? There are some of you that God in whose hand are your times, hath continued to you the day of Grace, twenty, thirty, yea forty years and more to some of you. Thankfully acknowledge the Grace of the Lord toward you.

Instruct. 2. *This teacheth us a Lesson of Humility and Submission to the will of God in case wee see evill dayes.* If a change of times come upon us or ours, the hand of the Lord is in it, and therefore to be patient and humble is that which becometh us. Amos. 3. 6. *Shall there be evill in the city and the Lord hath not done it? Shall any evill happen in a Town, or in a Family and the Lord not have an holy overruling hand in it? The Lord owneth evill of affliction as his Creature,* Isai. 45. 7. *I form the light, and I Create darkness, I make peace and create evill, I the Lord doe all these things.* Wherefore if any afflictive Providence do befall us, wee should say as Eli did, when he first heard of such an awfull Providence befalling his Family, as made the ears of every one that heard it to tingle, he said *it is the Lord, let him doe what seemeth him good,* 1. Sam. 3. 18. And indeed it is our best and wisest way, yea and *we* will be unto us, if wee will not submit to the Sovereigne will and pleasure of the Almighty, when once his will is manifested, Isai. 45. 9. *Who unne him that striveth with his Maker.* God will have the mastery over his Creatures, and will make them know that he is above them; and therefore it is in vain for any to struggle against God, it is great sin and folly so to doe.

Use. 2. *Of Consolation to the Children of God,* and it must needs be a Consideration full of glorious Consolation unto them if they doe by faith apprehend this truth, that all their times are

in the hand of their Father.

Wee shall mention two or three comfortable Meditations here.

1. *If their Times are in Gods hand, then all their other concerns whatsoever are in his hand.* This followeth by parity of reason. Your lives are in Gods hand, he is the *God of my life* said David. Our health is in his hand, *Hee is the health of my countenance.* Our Estates are in his hand, who is able to keep them, and whose blessing alone maketh rich. Our Relations are in his hand, some of you have Relations absent from you afar off upon the Sea, or in Countreys remote, remember they are in the hand of God wheresoever they may be. Others of you have near Relations, Children perhaps sick and in danger of death remember that they also are in Gods hand.

2. *Hence they are in the best hand that possibly can be.* You can not wish your times or concerns in a better hand, they are in a wise hand, he is the only wise God. They are in a Faithfull hand. It was Dr Prestons expression, that if the case were so with him that he might speak but three words before he went out of the world, these should be the words, **GOD IS FAITHFULL.** And in an able, yea in an Allsufficient hand, John. 10. 29. *My Father is greater then all, no man is able to pluck them out of my Fathers hand.* This is a great comfort to them that have faith to improve it. If a man be sick is it not a comfort to him to be in the hand of a skilfull, faithfull, compassionate, Physitian, So it is here.

3. *Here is ground of Comfort against all the designs of Satan, and his Instruments.* Our times are not in Satans hand, the Lord said to him concerning Job, *Touch not his life.* The Devill would fain have taken Jobs life from him, but he could not doe it, because it was not in his hand. It is true, that it is said of the Devill that he hath the power of Death, Hebr. 2. 14. Because he is employed in great and signall Judgments, to inflict death upon men, and the Jews of old had an opinion that great and sudden destructions were all wrought by him; but then he must have a commission from a higher hand, or he can doe nothing. And the like must be said concerning his Instruments in the world. Wee see in this context there were those that designed to take away Davids life, verse, 13. *against me they devised to take*

See Dr Owen
Expression
Hebr 2. 14.
265.

take

take away my life, but they could never do it, because his times were in Gods hand and not in theirs. So Herod sought Christs life, and after that the Jews would have killed him, and had many a fair opportunity so to doe, and yet it was not at those times accomplished when it was easy to have been done, forasmuch as the Lords time was not yet come, John. 7. 30.

Use 3. Let it be of sad and solemn Reproof, there are several sorts of men that fall under Conviction and just Reprehension here.

1. *This condemns those that will be curiously enquiring into those times that God keeps in his own hands alone.* The Disciples themselves were once blameworthy in this respect, Acts. 1.6,7. They said to Christ *wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* The Lord gave them a short return saying, *it is not for you to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.* Indeed there are some Times which wee ought to be enquiring into. The holy Prophets did enquire and search diligently into the time of Christs coming into the world, 1 Pet. 1.11. The men of Issachar were commended for their *Understanding in the times.* The Pharisees are reproved because they could not *discern the signs of the times.* Such Times as God hath revealed we should modestly enquire into. He hath told us how long the Reign of Anti-Christ shall continue, and therefore it is both lawfull and a duty, with Humility to be enquiring into that time. But there are some that will be enquiring into times that are kept secret, e. g. Some will be determining the year when the day of Judgment shall begin, Bur (although I deny not but that the age wherein that day shall begin may be conjectured at) Christ hath said of that day *and hour knoweth no man, no not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son but the Father,* Mark. 13.32. Others will be enquiring into the time when such a man shall dye &c. Some that *Calculate Nativities, Iudiciall Astrologers, Fortune-tellers,* are deeply guilty in this respect. The accursed and lying Vanities and Witchcrafts of such persons are fearfull transgressions in the sight of God. Certainly every man may say as Isaac did, Gen. 27.2. *I know not the day of my death,* and therefore great is their sin and folly that will goe about to determine when either themselves or others shall dye, you know not but

Tepe Zard
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& Veris
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that it may be every day, and the Lord hideth it from you, that so you might live every day as if it were your last.

2. *This Reprovethe those that build upon the time to come,* that say hereafter they will doe this and that and the other thing; the Apostle speaketh of such and reproveth them. Jam. 4.13,14. *Goe too now you that say to morrow wee will goe to such a City, and continue there a year whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? it is even a Vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.* It is too much presumption for you to allot upon the time to come, which is not in your hands, but in Gods only. How doe some say that hereafter they will repent of their Sins. This is the evill which Young men are especially guilty of, The Young man thinks with himself, Ile repent and endeavour to make my peace with God when old age is come upon me, but how dost thou know that thou shalt live till old age? It may be that God in whose hand is thy time, will not suffer thee to live so long. It is said, *one dyeth in full strength*, Job. 21.23. Doe wee not see examples for it before our eyes from day to day? How dost thou know but that thou shalt dye in thy full strength? Another saith, Ile repent when I come to lye upon a sick bed, & a death bed, but it may be thou shalt not dye in thy bed and how then? It may be thou shalt have no sickness before death. Death may come upon thee and not give thee a moments warning. Remember that Scripture, Prov. 27.1. *Boast not thy selfe to morrow thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* O what did one day bring forth this last week, one morning the other day brought forth that which will never be forgotten by many here present.

3. *This Reprovethe those that doe provoke the Lord to cut off their time.* The Sins of men provoke God to shorten their time and dayes in this world. Alas! it is not long since I did upon a very sad occasion insift upon those words, Ecclef. 7.17. *Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish, for why shouldst thou dye before thy time?* Great sins bring untimely death, Drunkenness, Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, Atheisme, Neglect of Prayer, and the like evils bring untimely death upon those that are so guilty, especially if they have had many offers of grace, Psal. 81.13,15. *O that my People had hearkened to mee-- their time should have endured.* But when men will

will not hearken to God, he will not suffer their time to endure long. There was an awfull Providence amongst us above a yeat agoe, which you may remember occasioned the preaching of severall Sermons from that Scripture, Prov. 29. 1. *He that being often reproved hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.*

Use 4. *Of Exhortation to Sanctifie the Name of God when wee see his hand putting an end to the time of these or those in an awfull manner.*

I would apply this particularly with respect to that fatal & dismal Stroke which hapned amongst us the last week. That Providence is it self a loud Sermon, it is a warning piece from Heaven, and if God Preach, his Ministers should preach too. It may not be amiss then to Second this Solemn work of God with a Solemn word.

Some *Considerations and Directions* let me set before you.

Consider, 1. *How awfully this Providence is Circumstanced,* It is so in respect of the time when it happens, even at a time when the Lord is frowning upon us, and threatening of us in other respects. The Lords hand is at this day stretched out against our Brethren in a neighbour Plantation, and God expects that wee should take notice of it, and be warned by it, as sometimes it was said concernig Jerusalem, Zeph. 3. 6, 7. *I have cut off the Nations, and I said surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive Instruction.* When the Lords hand was upon Neighbouring Places, he looked that Jerusalem should thereby take warning, so now that the Famine is like to prevail upon Virginia, God saith, sure *New-England* will fear me and receive Instruction.

This providence is likewise awfully Circumstanc^d, in that it cometh at a time when there are lamentable Out breakings of Iniquity. Not long since *two Murderers* were executed amongst us, and since that another horrid Murder discovered, and it is to be feared that many will be found with the guilt of blood in their Skirts.

And this Providence is awfully Circumstanced, in respect of the suddeness of this fatal blow, no warning given of it beforehand, no man that expected or ever thought of such a thing till the moment wherein the dismal blow was given.

And

And awfully Circumstanced in respect of the number of Persons whom the hand of the Lord hath fallen upon, *no less then nine Persons, and three of them already dead*, besides another that was taken away by sudden death the very same day.

Capt. Samuel
Pearler, & Mr
John Freake.

And awfully Circumstanced in respect of the quality of the Persons whom the Lord hath taken away, I mean with respect to those two who were of this Congregation. The Common-wealth hath a loss in respect of them both, since it must needs be acknowledged that they had more of a publick, noble, generous spirit then can be said of most amongst us. Yea and the Church also hath a great loss in respect of one of them, even the Church wherof he was a member, since that he did Industriously set himself to promote the welfare of the Church as well as of the Common-wealth. I have heard it from some that knew it, that his Mother who was a precious godly woman had a particular faith for that son of hers, she beleived that God would bless him and make him a blessing in his Generation, and wee have seen that his godly Mothers faith was not in vain for him, but therefore the loss is the greater, and the providence the more awfull.

Consider 2. *That there are no persons in all the world unto whom God speaketh by this Providence as he doth to us.* Indeed the Lord speaketh thereby unto others, yea unto all that shall hear of it. Hee speaketh to *New-England*, and more particularly this is a speaking Providence to *Boston*, but most of all to us of *this Congregation*, in that they whom the Lord hath slain were of us. This thing hath been done in our hearing and before our eyes, our eyes have beheld the Slaughter which the Lord hath made, yea and by their Deaths he hath wounded us. Come let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn us, he hath smitten us.

Consider, 3. *That this is not the first warning which the Lord hath given us.* How many sudden deaths have there been? Not to mention things of an elder date, which in the day of them I have not been altogether wanting to mind you of. This last year wee have thus been warned, not once nor twice. This Spring severall amongst us have been snatched away by sudden strokes of the Lords hand. And it is not a year agoe (hardly three quarters of a year) since there was such another awfull

Blow as

as that which I am now speaking of, when that Shop was blown up with a Barrel of Powder, and one man was killed, and (as I remember) seven or eight wounded. Now it is to be feared that wee were not affected and awakened with that Stroke as should have been, and therefore the Lord is put upon it to bring another more awfull then the former.

Consider 4. *That if wee doe not sanctifie the Name of God under this awfull Providence, Lamentable things will follow.* *Isai. 26. 11. Lord when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.* Wo to us if wee will not see when the Lords hand is lifted up in such an awfull manner, what can wee then expect but utter Confusion? wee may then expect that the Lord hath not yet done with us. No, He will not turn away from his anger, but his hand will be stretched out still. Then look for it, the Lord will take away others that are usefull, serviceable, and desirable; and if he take away a few such what a naked destitute people will you be? yea we may then expect that there shall be Calamity, and *Lamentation generally.* It is mentioned as a dreadfull Prefage of generall Calamity coming upon the Children of Israel when it is said that *God overthrew some of them as he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,* that is by sudden and fiery destruction, *Amos. 4. 11.* And Christ doth intimate to the Jews, that sudden and awfull destruction which came upon a few of them, did (without repentance) fore-run and foretell a day of generall Calamity coming upon them, *Luke. 13. 3, 5.*

You will say but what shall wee doe that so wee may sanctifie the Lords Name under this awfull hand of his upon us?

Ans. Follow these *Directions.*

1. *Take notice of the hand of God in this that is come to pass.* Doe not think that this is a meer accident or chance; the Philistines were willing to think so when the hand of the Lord was upon them, *1. Sam. 6. 9. Then (say they) wee shall know that it is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that hapned to us.* Christians should know and speak otherwise, it is not a Chance that hath hapned to us, but assuredly it is the hand of the Lord that hath smitten us: therefore eye his holy hand, especially you that were any way related to those that are now dead, you should eye the hand of the Lord, that so you may be Patient
and

and Humble under his Dispensations toward you. Thus it was with that godly woman *Naomi*, when most bitter bereavements came upon her, when her husband and other near and dear Relations were snatched from her, she considered that the hand of the Almighty was in those Killing Strokes. *The hand of the Lord is gone out against me*, the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me, the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me, *Ruth. 1. 13, 20, 21.* And thus it was with *David* when those Calamities which the Text seemeth to have respect unto, did befall him, *Psal. 39. 9, 10. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it, remove thy stroke away from me, I am consumed by the Blow of thine hand.* Believe it, this stroke is the Lords stroke, this blow is the blow of Gods hand, the Lord himself hath done it. Think of that, that so you may sit down in Silence before the Lord. If a man did see the hand of the Almighty giving the blow, would he? durst he find fault?

2. *Lij it to heart.* It is not enough for us to take notice of the Lords hand, but wee must labour to be duely affected there with, *Eccle. 7. 2. It is better to goe to the house of mourning then to the house of feasting, the Living will lay it to his heart.* Wee should with Sorrow Lament over this dreadfull dolefull breach. So did *Moses* direct the Children of Israel in the like case *Lev. 10. 6. Let your Brethren, the whole house of Israel bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled.* There were two men that were taken away out of the world by a sudden and fiery stroke, and all their brethren even the whole house of Israel must Lament for it. Truly so it hath been amongst us, Two men have dyed Suddenly and that by fire too, now it concerns us to bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled, wee should mourn in secret places because of this thing. It would be sad if it should be said of us as sometimes of Israel, *Isai. 42. 25. He hath poured on him the fury of his anger, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.* Shall the anger of the Lord be burning round about us, and yet wee not lay it to heart?

3. *Let us adore the hand of God.* Wee read concerning *Job*, that when the Lord brought those sudden changes upon him, by the Death of near Relations, and the loss of his estate, *He fell down.*

down upon the ground and worshipped. Job. 1. 20. Wee should turn such things into Prayer and humble adoration before the Lord. Adore his greatness, his sovereignty, his power, his wisdom, his righteousness, who may at his pleasure punish us or ours, and it is not for us to say unto him what dost thou?

4. *Let us labour to understand the Lords mind and meaning in this awfull Providence.* Certainly the Lord speaketh something by it, yea some great thing, and therefore wee have cause to blame our own dulness of understanding if we know not what it is that the Lord would have us to hear and to learn; were we wise as we should be, it would be otherwise with us. Mic. 6. 9. *The Lords voice cryeth to the city, the man of wisdom shall see thy name, hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it. O let us not be like beasts that only feel the rod, but hear it not. The Lords voice cryeth to the city. Truly this awfull Providence which I am speaking of is the Lords voice; it cryeth to the City, it cryeth to the Town. This Solemn voice of the Lord cryeth to Boston. If wee be men of wisdom we shall see his Name, yea we shall sanctifie his Name.*

5. *Let us Repent of past and present Iniquities.* Doth God bring such awfull Providences upon us that so we might Censure the dead? No, but to be Instructions and warnings to the living, that so they may be awakened to unfeigned Repentance for all their sins, wherefore Christ hath said, *Those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem, I tell you nay, but except you repent you all shall likewise perish,* Luke. 13. 4, 5. So I say do you think that these nine men upon whome this Blow hath fallen, and sundry of them slain thereby, were Sinners above any in Boston, I tell you nay, but except you repent you shall likewise perish. Especially repent of those sins which bring such awfull Strokes as these. *Security* is such a sin, when myttical Babylon (that is Rome) saith I shall see no sorrow, then doe her Plagues come in one day, death and mourning. When men cry peace, peace, then cometh sudden destruction. The Lord roares from on high that he may awaken Sinners out of their Security. And *disregard to the word of God* is that which brings such dismall Providences upon poor Creatures. When men regard not the still voice of the word, Mountaines are rent, and Rocks are broken in pieces before the Lord. Hence it is that the most awfull

Providences are usually in those places where the word of God is preached in the greatest power. *God is terrible out of his holy places.* Have you not observed that there have been more Sudden deaths, and awfull Tremendous dispensations of divine Providences in *New-England* then in any place where you have been? How so? Even because the word of God is plentifully and powerfully dispensed throughout this Land, but men regard it not as they ought to doe, and therefore the Lord speaketh by his Works, in a most awfull manner from time to time, O think of it, and repent!

Lastly, *Be prepared for change of Times.* Now you are in Prosperity. but prepare for a day of Adversity, who knoweth how soon the Iniquity of thy heels will overtake thee, and the dayes of evill come upon thee? Especially prepare for that last and great charge which will come upon every Soul amongst you, and you know not how soon or how suddenly. And indeed thats the voice of the Lord in this Providence, Calling upon all that hear of it and, saying *Prepare for Death! Prepare for Death! Prepare for Death!* you know not but that you (as well as others that are gone may dye suddenly. The best man in this Congregation, yea upon the face of the earth, may for ought that any one can say, be (as Moses was) suddenly taken out of the world. And therefore make sure of an Interest in Jesus Christ. If death come upon a man and find him out of Christ, it had been better for him that he had never been born. O then labour to be found in him, not having your own righteousness, but that which is through the Faith of Christ. Wo for ever to that man, whom Death shall find, having nothing but his own Righteousness. It may be he is honest in his dealings with men, and hath this or that morall Qualification, but he is a stranger to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, if death find him in that estate, he is undone eternally. Also see that you keep in the Lords way because Death may come upon you suddenly, and if it should find you out of Gods way, that would be uncomfortable. I remember one of the Antients maketh mention of a woman that was a Christian, who would needs go and see a *Stage-play* acted, and when she was there, God suffered the Devill to take bodily possession of her, and being demanded how he got possession of one that was a Christian, and reputed a good woman? Why said

(said the Devill) *I found her in mine own ground, and therefore I might well take possession of her.* I speak not this to reflect upon the dead, I know not but that they might be in their way when this Stroke came upon them, but to Caution the living, *If you goe out of Gods way, the Devill finds you in his own ground,* and then are you exposed to great temptations and miseries. O take heed of sinning against God. A Sinner it may be as soon as ever he hath sinned, as soon as ever he hath spoken a vain or wicked word, Death will seize upon him and carry him before the Tribunal of the Lord. A Christian should often be propounding three Questions to himself. 1. What am I? 2. Where am I? 3. What doe I? *What am I?* Am I in a good estate fit to dye? Am I in Christ, or am I not in Christ? Am I one that truly feareth God? And *where am I?* am I in the Place which God would have me to be in? Have I a Call to be here? And *what doe I?* Am I doing that which is pleasing in the sight of God? Is the work which I am about a good work, or an evill work? And he that shall be as to his *State* as ought to be, and shall withall keep in the Lords way, needs not fear any Death. No Death can hurt him though never so sudden; But if *he be found* with Loyns girded, and Lamp lighted, He shall goe into the Chambers of Everlasting rest and peace. Blessed is that Servant whom the Lord at his Coming shall find so doing; yea Blessed are they which dye in the Lord, for they cease from their Labours and their Works follow them.

Tibi Domine.
